

Spring 1-15-2009

ENG 3401-001: Methods of Teaching Composition

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Syllabus: English 3401, Methods of Teaching Composition

Instructor: Robin L. Murray

Office Hours: T/R 11-12:30, 4-5 & by appnt.

Class time and place: Tuesday/Thursday 5-6:15 in CH 3130/3120

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Course Objectives:

Following NCTE Guidelines and Illinois Content Area Standards this course will

1. demonstrate how reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and thinking are interrelated;
2. recognize the impact of cultural, economic, and social environments upon language;
3. show a respect for and an understanding of diversity in language use, patterns, dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles;
4. demonstrate the influence of language and visual images on thinking and composing;
5. demonstrate how written discourse can influence thought and action;
6. display an understanding of the role of technology in communication;
7. use major sources of research and theory to understand the relationship between research and practice;
8. examine, evaluate, and select resources;
9. design instruction to meet the needs of all students and provide for students' continuous progress and success;
10. organize classroom environments and learning experiences that promote effective whole class, small group, and individual work;
11. create learning environments which promote respect for and support of individual differences of ethnicity, race, language, culture, gender, and ability;
12. use assessment as an integral part of instruction and learning

Texts (in addition to hand-outs):

Atwell, Nancie. In the Middle.

Kirby, Dan, et al. Inside Out.

Lattimer, Heather. Thinking Through Genre.

Maxwell, Rhoda, and Meiser, Mary Jordan. Teaching English in Middle and Secondary Schools

Romano, Tom. Blending Genre, Altering Style.

Weaver, Constance. Teaching Grammar in Context.

Course Requirements:

1. **Response Statements and Quizzes (In and Out of Class):** Responses are about two pages typed and reflect careful reading and synthesis of course materials. Your responses will serve as a source for discussion in class as a whole or in small groups. Some of your responses will be brief written responses or in-class quizzes.
2. **Composition Unit and Lesson Presentation:** More detailed information will be forthcoming. A lesson from your unit will be presented to the class as a teaching demonstration.
3. **Rationale for Composition Unit:** You will write a 6-8 page argument paper supporting the goals and texts in your literature unit. Your paper should argue a position regarding your unit focus and support it with evidence published during the last five years. Be sure to refute the opposition as well as support your views.
4. **Annotations for Ten Current Articles** perused for your theoretical paper
5. **One 6-8 Page Paper:** You will write a paper arguing a position on a topic relevant to composition teaching, especially as it pertains to your group's composition pedagogy.
6. **Group Presentation:** This presentation will provide an overview of a particular composition pedagogy and define its pluses and minuses.
7. **Clinical Experience Essay:** You will write a 4-6 page essay based on a rubric I will distribute.
8. **Philosophy/Theory of composition instruction:** This 500 word essay will highlight axiology, process, epistemology, and pedagogy as it relates to your own views of composition instruction.
9. **Professional Portfolio:** This will follow the checklist I will distribute on day one.

• Reading Responses

These one-page, single-spaced (with MLA-style parenthetical citations, reading responses are perhaps the most important writing you will do in this class because they will help you to think through the readings, and they will form the basis for your contributions to discussions.

Please include the following in each response: A title—this will signal to your readers that you have a clear focus. A clear reference to the title and author of the piece you're referring to. An epigraph, or a brief block quotation from the assigned reading or observation—to demonstrate close reading or observation and to bring readers into your response. A question, or a series of questions raised in the course of the reading. A response to the quotation and the questions it raises.

Note: Please keep all responses with my instructor comments (and/or peer feedback) in a folder/notebook. You will also be asked to lead the class discussion during one class, based on your (and your peers') reading responses.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

An A Response: Has an original title that signals that you have a clear focus. You begin with an epigraph—a key quotation from the reading; you offer both a personal and critical reading of the significance of the quotation you've selected. You avoid summary and say something insightful about the reading. Your writing has been “crafted”—that is, carefully constructed with clear, grammatically correct prose and no distracting typos.

A B-Response: May have many of the markers of the A response but the explanations for why you selected your quotation is less developed. You summarize at times instead of showing insight. There may be a few typos/grammatical errors.

A C Response: Lacks focus, no or unconnected title, a number of writing errors (spelling, typos, and grammatical errors), little or no direct reference to our reading, not enough reflection/questioning/evidence to be considered a substantive response.

Methods of Evaluation: Grades will be determined as follows:

Responses, Attendance, quizzes and Class Participation:	15%
Composition Unit and mini-lesson presentation	15%
Rationale	15%
Position Paper and Annotations	15%
Group Presentation	15%
Clinical Experience Journal	10%
Philosophy of Teaching Composition	10%
Professional Portfolio (see checklist)	05%

Attendance: Please note that attendance is very important in this class. If you miss more than two classes, your grade will be lowered 1/2 letter grade per class beyond two.

Plagiarism Statement: “Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work—has the right and the responsibility to impose the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of “F” for the course.”

ADA Compliance Policy: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Tentative Composition Methods Spring 2009 Calendar, Subject to Change

January

- 13 Introduction to the course. Discussion of course expectations. Discussion concerning types of writing pedagogies and writing process activities. Check out and possibly join NCTE and IATE online. Review Composition pedagogies in groups for group presentations. Read chapters 1 and 2, Inside Out for R. and write a response.
- 15 **Response Due.** Inside Out response group activity. Discuss Group Presentations—a focused presentation on a composition pedagogy—expressivist? Collaborative? Cultural studies? Post process? Genre based? —or on a type of writing or element of the writing process. I will pass out and discuss assignments for all requirements today—please keep! They will also be posted on Nicenet. Sign contract regarding syllabus. Read Inside Out chapters by group: Group I: 3, 4. Group II: 5, 6. Group III: 7, 8. Group IV: 9, and 10. Be prepared to present information from your chapters to the rest of the class.
- 20 Mini-presentations by group. Read chapters 11 and 12, Inside Out for Thursday and write a response.
- 22 **Response Due.** Discuss writing poetry and writing about literature. Read chapters 13-15 in Inside Out for Tuesday and prepare for quiz.
- 27 Quiz on chapters 13-15, IO. Discuss Livetext, NCTE and Illinois Standards. IO Resources. Read chapters 1 and 2 in Maxwell for Thursday and write a response.
- 29 **Response due.** Read Maxwell chapters 3 and 4 for Tuesday and prepare for quiz.

February

- 3 Quiz on Maxwell chapters 3 and 4. Read chapter 6, Maxwell, and write a response.
- 5 **Response due.** Discuss chapter 6. Read chapters 8 and 9, Maxwell, for Tuesday and prepare for Quiz.
- 10 Quiz on chapters 8 and 9, Maxwell. Read Maxwell chapter 12 for Thursday and write a response.
- 12 **Response due.** Discuss chapter 12. Read Weaver selections and chapter 7 Maxwell for Tuesday.
- 17 Discuss grammar instruction—grammar quiz from writing center? Read Maxwell chapter 13 for Thursday, write a response and bring in your unit topic.
- 19 **Response and Unit Topic due.** Discuss units and rationales. Prepare for first group presentation.
- 24 **Group I Presentation.** Write an evaluative response to group I for Thursday and read Romano chapter selections.

- 26 **Group II Presentation.** Write an evaluative response to group II for Tuesday and read Romano chapter selections.

March

- 3 **Group III Presentation.** Write an evaluative response to group III for Thursday and read Romano chapter selections.
- 5 **Group IV Presentation.** Write an evaluative response to group IV for Tuesday and read Romano chapter selections. Response to Romano chapters by group due on Tuesday, as well.
- 10 **Evaluative Response on rubric and Romano Response due.** Discuss argument papers and annotated bibliographies. Choose a topic related to your group's presentation and begin researching articles. Bring in topic on Thursday.

- 12 **Argument Paper topic due.** Find ten articles by the end of class and begin annotations (see handout). Annotated bib due March 26—Thursday after spring break. Draft due March 31.

- 16-20 **Spring Break—No Classes!**

- 24 Selections from In the Middle and Thinking Through Genre

- 26 **Annotated Bib due for peer review.**

- 31 **Argument Paper draft due for peer review and conferencing.**

April

- 2 Selections from In the Middle and Thinking Through Genre

- 7 Selections from In the Middle and Thinking Through Genre

- 9 **Composition unit and rationale drafts due for peer review and conferencing.**

- 14 **Clinical Experience Essay and Composition Theory/Philosophy drafts due for peer review and conferencing.**

- 16 Portfolio draft due with "final" drafts of unit, rationale, clinical experience essay, and philosophy (along with other requirements on checklist)

- 21 Portfolio due with final drafts of unit, rationale, clinical experience essay, and philosophy (along with other requirements on checklist)

- 23 Mini-lesson presentations.

- 28 Mini-lesson presentations.

- 30 Last Class Day—Mini-lesson presentations

Hints for Writing Summaries

- *Read* the article carefully. Determine its structure. Identify the author's purpose in writing. (This will help you distinguish between more important and less important information).
- *Reread*. This time divide the article into sections or stages of thought. The author's use of paragraphing will often be a useful guide. Label the article itself, each section or stage of thought. Underline key ideas and terms.
- *Write one-sentence summaries*, on a separate sheet of paper, of each stage of thought.
- *Write a thesis: a one- or two-sentence summary of the entire article*. The thesis should express the central idea of the passage, as you have determined from the preceding steps. You may find it useful to keep in mind the information contained in the lead sentence or paragraph of most newspaper stories—the *what, who, why, where, when, and how* of the matter. For persuasive articles, summarize in a sentence the author's conclusion. For descriptive passages, indicate the subject of the description and its key feature(s). Note: In some cases, a suitable thesis may already be in the original passage. If so, you may want to quote it directly in your summary.
- *Write a first draft of your summary* by (1) combining the thesis with your list of one-sentence summaries or (2) combining the thesis with one-sentence summaries plus significant details from the passage. In either case, eliminate repetition and less important information. Disregard minor details or generalize them (e.g., Reagan and Bush might be generalized as "recent presidents"). Use as few words as possible to convey the main ideas.
- *Revise your summary*, inserting transitional words and phrases where necessary to ensure coherence. Check for style. Avoid a series of short, choppy sentences. Combine sentences for a smooth, logical flow of ideas. Check for grammatical correctness, punctuation, and spelling.

Types of Argument

1. What is this thing (categorical)?

Any statement about the nature of things fixed in some moment of time can be cast as a categorical proposition (CP), a sentence which places its subject in the category of its predicate.

Subject	Linking Verb	Predicate
All art	is	an illusion.
Caligula	was	a spoiled brat.
Ballet dancers	are	really athletes.

To argue this, the definition of the predicate must be acceptable to the audience and the evidence or examples about the subject must be verifiable.

2. What caused it or what effects does it have (causal)?

An assertion of cause and effect adds the dimension of time and is therefore not supported with definition but with another kind of ruling assumption, that of agency, a basic belief about what can cause what.

Examples:

a) A significant cause of teenage vandalism is violence on TV. (because most audiences will readily accept imitation as a human motive, we would not have to stop and argue it here)

b) Wearing a mouth plate can improve athletic performance. (must explain agency here).

Problems: Students need to think up the possible cause of an event. (could be necessary, sufficient, remote and proximate, or as conditions and influences acted on by precipitating cause) Convincing an audience that a particular cause did in fact operate is the second problem students encounter.

3. Is it good or bad (evaluative)? An evaluation is a proposition that makes a value judgment.

Examples:

a) The San Diego Padres are a bad team.

b) *Jane Eyre* is a great novel.

c) The open classroom is a poor learning environment.

Note: All evaluations rest ultimately on criteria or assumptions of value.

4. What should be done about it (proposal)? This proposition is a call to action. (Problem/Solution)

Examples:

a) Wolves should be reestablished in the forests of northern Pennsylvania and a stiff fine levied for killing them. First the audience must be convinced that some problem exists, in this case the absence or extreme rarity of wolves in certain areas. Then the writer must argue further to trace the bad consequences (deer herds out of control) or show the ethical wrongness of the situation (species removed from rightful habitat). Single out the dominant reason for the problem, as well.

Composition-Based Conceptual Unit Assignment

Please note: Your unit, as outlined here, will follow a detailed 6-8 page rationale for teaching your unit that addresses your unit focus (concepts) and justifications. See prompt.

Assignment: Construct a composition-based conceptual unit that includes the following:

1. **Front matter** that outlines your unit parameters (see explanation below—this should come up front!
2. A **syllabus** and **calendar** that includes your unit daily objectives and mini-lesson plans. Note that the unit should include all of the elements Smagorinski outlines in his text. Your lessons should be sequenced and should begin with an introductory activity. Your texts should be chosen according to your unit focus.
3. At least one complete lesson plan.
4. Assignment sheets for each assignment—both formal and informal.
5. Rubrics or some other form of evaluation to go with each assignment.

Explanation:

A. Front Matter (the policies should go here as in a syllabus):

1. Include a unit title and then (in a brief paragraph) describe your focus.
2. You should specify audience (type of students) and **reasons** for that audience. Remember that some units will work best with a specific age group. Also, the way a teacher approaches a specific writing assignment depends on the type of student she/he is teaching.
3. Specify long-term goals. Provide a rationale for each of your goals and objectives. Remember that goals should be demonstrable—students will demonstrate. . . .—and should reflect your assessments
4. Include a description of the writing and reading process students will follow to achieve your goals and objectives. Remember that some writing process theorists see the process as chiefly based on development of cognitive skills. Others argue that a social element of some kind is necessary for growth as a writer and should be part of the writing process and that writing itself should be reader-centered. Others take an expressivist position on the writing process that proclaims that writing is always writer centered. Still others see writing as chiefly text-centered, so the writing process should involve correcting problems at the textual level. Reading process information is in the Reading in High School Classrooms text.
5. Include an overview of your methods of evaluation

B. Syllabus/Calendar: A **syllabus** and **calendar** should include your unit daily objectives and mini-lesson plans. Note that the unit should include all of the elements Smagorinski outlines in his text. Your lessons should be sequenced and should begin with an introductory activity. Your texts should be chosen according to your unit focus. The calendar should reflect the following:

- An Introductory Activity like an Inventory
- Long-term Goals and Daily Objectives
- Assessment / Evaluation / Grading Tools that Align with Goals and Objectives
- One Lesson Plan and a unit of mini-plans that includes elements from Smagorinski like the following:
 - Activities
 - Discussions
 - Texts and Other Resources (including films)
 - Tools
 - Composing

C. Expanded Lesson Plan

D. Assignment Sheets for each assignment to distribute to students

E. Rubrics

Philosophy/Theory of Teaching Composition

Your Philosophy/Theory of Composition Instruction should address each of the four areas delineated by Fulkerson: Axiology, Procedure, Pedagogy, and Epistemology.

Explanation:

Axiology: What do you value in a piece of writing? Should it be correct in terms of facts and/or grammar? Should it express the student's innermost thoughts? Should it communicate clearly to an audience?

Procedure: What is your belief about students' writing processes? Do students write best in isolation? Do they write in stages related to their cognitive development? Do they need to interact with resources like books and articles and/or peers and outside experiences in order to develop their writing?

Pedagogy: What teaching methods do you believe should be implemented in order to serve secondary students best, helping them improve their writing and enhancing their writing processes?

Epistemology: How do learning styles enter into writing and writing instruction, especially in terms of the integrated language arts? What do you believe students need to know in order to write well, and how do they gain that knowledge?

Example:

My theory of composition instruction begins where Fulkerson's essay suggests it should, after examining research in the field of composition studies—with a rhetorical axiology. In other words, I believe a paper should, more than anything else, communicate well with its audience. That doesn't mean that it will communicate its points well to all readers but to the audience to which it is addressed. An article I have written for a literary journal, then, will not necessarily make sense to high school students, but it should make sense to that journal's typical readers, even if those readers disagree with my points.

I believe students' writing processes depend on both their cognitive development and on their interaction with resources of various kinds—including peers and personal experience. I believe students write best when they are given opportunities to interact with these resources.

My pedagogy reflects this belief about students' writing processes. In writing classes, I sequence writing assignments according to the cognitive skills on which they draw. I include activities that encourage interaction with various resources: I include readings as models and topic sources and peer reviews at all parts of the writing process, including brainstorming, organizing of ideas, drafting, and proofreading.

By beliefs about learning styles and epistemologies requires that I vary classroom activities to include those that stimulate oral, visual, and tactile learners.

Scope and Format: MLA Style. Approximately 500 words.

Clinical Experience Essay

In an essay of approximately 1000 words (4 double-spaced pages), reflect on and describe classroom activities you have observed or initiated. Your goal is to demonstrate that you meet the Target (3) level of involvement with your students. Address composition issues as much as possible and discuss how you might address areas not addressed in your clinical experience once you enter your own classroom.

Please see the descriptors below:

<u>NOT ACCEPTABLE (1)</u>	<u>ACCEPTABLE (2)</u>	<u>TARGET (3)</u>	<u>CANDIDATE SCORE</u>
Shows little evidence of creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment in which all students can engage in learning	Creates an inclusive and supportive learning environment in which all students can engage in learning	Creates and sustains an inclusive and supportive learning environment in which all students can engage in learning	_____
Shows little evidence in using ELA for helping students become familiar with their own and others' cultures	Uses ELA to help students become familiar with their own and others' cultures	Uses ELA extensively and creatively to help students become familiar with their own and others' cultures	_____
Demonstrates inconsistency in reflective practice and seldom pursues professional growth and collaboration with colleagues	Demonstrates reflective practice and collaboration with both faculty and other candidates	Uses the results of reflective practice not only to adapt instruction and behavior but also to develop a well-conceived plan for professional development	_____
Engages in few practices designed to assist students in developing habits of critical thinking and judgment	Uses practices designed to assist students in developing habits of critical thinking and judgment	Designs and implements instructions and assessment that assist students in developing habits of critical thinking	_____
Shows a lack of understanding of how the ELA curriculum teachers, students, and education in general are influenced by culture, social events, and issues	Makes meaningful connections between how the ELA curriculum and developments in culture, society, and education	Plans and carries out frequent and extended learning experiences that integrate arts and humanities into the daily learning of their students	_____

Candidate's total score _____

Rationale evaluation

1. Identify and write down the elements of rationales that coincide with each of the following points. Then offer positive feedback and suggestions for improving work in each area.

- Well-defined parameters for your unit
- Clear positions in favor of teaching your unit
- A convincing argument with evidence in support of teaching your unit
- Refutation of counter-arguments
- An appropriate tone

2. Offer initial thoughts and Parting words.

- What worked for you? What didn't?
- What would you like to learn more about?
- How could this student further develop his or her ideas?
- What is missing?

3. Respond to the Rationale handout as a guide as well, answering the following questions:

- What concepts are central to the topic of this unit
- Why am I teaching this unit and its concepts?
- What types of justifications am I primarily relying on to support my rationale (psychology/human development, cultural significance, etc.)?
- Within each justification, what are the main claims that can be made about its relevance to the unit I'm proposing (e.g., studying protest literature is important because it helps students understand the role of conscience to social action)?
- For each claim, what kinds of evidence can I provide that would be persuasive to others, and how can I provide a warrant that explains the ways in which the evidence supports my claim?
- What counterarguments can I anticipate against my rationale, and how can I provide a rebuttal for them?
- How can I provide a rationale for each of the texts that my students read in conjunction with the unit focus?

Teaching Composition Rationale Assignment

Audience: Think of your audience as someone who disagrees with at least part of your argument.

Purpose and Assignment: Write a **position paper** justifying the teaching of your unit, concentrating in particular on the overarching concept and the texts you are teaching. Examine the elements of your unit critically, take a position, and develop a reasoned argument in support of your position.

Explanation A position paper usually contains the following features:

- well-defined parameters for your unit,
- clear positions in favor of teaching your unit,
- a convincing argument with evidence in support of teaching your unit and refuting counter-arguments,
- and an appropriate tone.

As Smagorinsky explains, when writing your rationale, consider the following related questions:

- What concepts are central to the topic of this unit?
- Why am I teaching this unit and its concepts?
- What types of justifications am I primarily relying on to support my rationale (psychology/human development, cultural significance, etc.)?
- Within each justification, what are the main claims that can be made about its relevance to the unit I'm proposing (e.g., studying protest literature is important because it helps students understand the role of conscience to social action)?
- For each claim, what kinds of evidence can I provide that would be persuasive to others, and how can I provide a warrant that explains the ways in which the evidence supports my claim?
- What counterarguments can I anticipate against my rationale, and how can I provide a rebuttal for them?
- How can I provide a rationale for each of the texts that my students read in conjunction with the unit focus?

Please see pages 62-65 for further information about writing a rationale for your unit.

Here are some further thoughts:

- Your rationale should clearly indicate your position (s). You may qualify your claims to accommodate strong opposing arguments, but you should avoid vagueness or indecision. I suggest you declare your position in a thesis statement early in the rationale.
- To convince readers, you must also provide sound reasoning and solid evidence in support of your claims. You must also anticipate possible arguments and either accommodate or refute them.
- The main points supporting a claim should be not only stated clearly, but also explained and fully developed. You can cite various kinds of evidence in support of a position, including anecdotes, authorities, and statistics.
- You also need to acknowledge opposing points of view and accommodate or refute them. Accommodating an opposing argument basically involves admitting that it has validity and qualifying one's own view to account for it. Refuting an opposing argument means trying to show how it is wrong.
- Find a tone that adequately expresses your feelings without shutting down communication altogether. Ideally, you gain readers' confidence and respect both by the way you reason and by the language you use.

Scope: This rationale should be from 6-8 pages and should include references to at least eight current sources you have consulted. To write an effective rationale, limit the topic to manageable proportions.

English 3401, Methods of Teaching Composition Group Project Ideas

Purpose:

The purpose of this group presentation is to take a critical approach to one aspect of the Writing Process and one composition pedagogy (as reflected by readings) and present it to the class as a group.

Audience:

Think of your audience as your classmates, who have read the readings you assign but are looking for new insights about your writing process and composition pedagogy area. Because all of us, including your instructor, have our own ideas about what is “entertaining,” and because all of us are products of the television generations, you should avoid lectures and dry readings. The presentations should, then, involve as many of the integrated language arts as possible.

Assignment:

You and your group should present information about your composition pedagogy and area of the writing process that will not only teach the class but involve the class in through activities and mock tutorials. Use techniques that you and your group members believe will most readily convey your message and most completely keep your audience’s attention.

Your presentation should comply with the following guidelines:

- 1.It should focus class for part of your class period.
- 2.It should rely equally on each group member.
- 3.It should be presented by a group of no more than three or four.
- 4.It should capture everyone’s attention and maintain it.
- 5.It should involve students in activities that apply the skills/ideas you are conveying.
- 6.It should also focus your argument paper on a composition pedagogy or one aspect of the writing process—this will be completed and submitted individually.

Explanation:

This group presentation could include visuals of all kinds. You could make a video modeling your aspect of the writing process. You could display posters or overheads. You could vary activities to include group work and independent/individual activities, as well as whole class discussion. You could also do a game show or some other intriguing presentation you think of in your groups. You definitely want to avoid dry lectures and sterile summaries of the readings.

Scope and due Dates:

On your syllabus I have indicated dates when you will do your presentation. You will sign up for your presentation on January 15.